

REMARKS

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's thorough consideration provided the present application. Claims 1-5, 7-11 and 13-19 are now present in the application. Claims 1, 7, 13 and 14 have been amended. Claims 15-19 have been added. Claims 1, 7 and 13 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Reasons For Entry Of Amendments

As discussed in greater detail hereinafter, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are improper and should immediately be withdrawn. Accordingly, the finality of the Final Office Action mailed on March 14, 2006 should be withdrawn.

In addition, claims 13 and 14 had been added in the Amendment dated January 11, 2006. However, the Examiner in the instant Office Action did not raise any rejection against dependent claims 13 and 14. Therefore, it is believed claims 13 and 14 are allowable. By the present amendment, dependent claim 13 has been rewritten into independent form to include the subject matter of its base claim 1. Accordingly, it is believed that independent claim 13 is in condition for allowance.

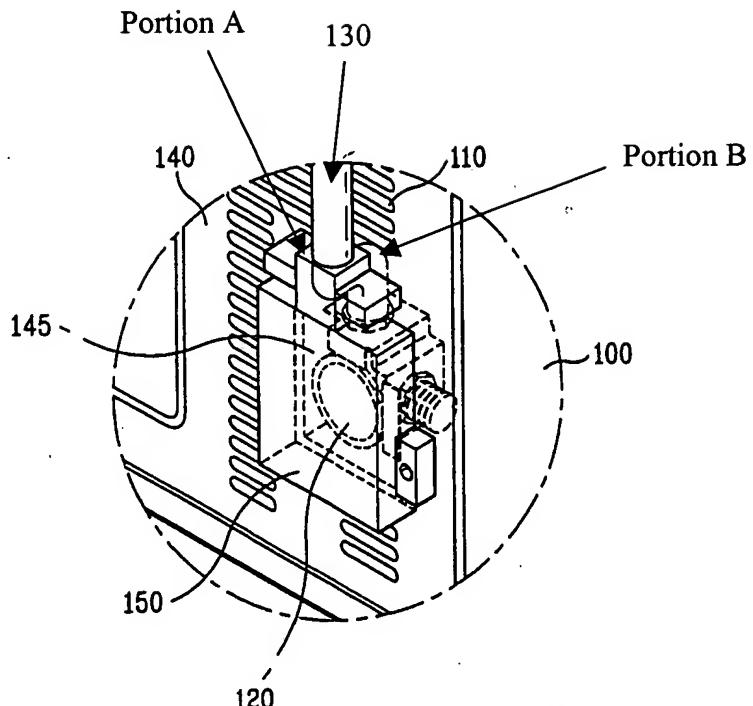
However, if the Examiner does not agree and raises new rejection(s) against claim 13, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has to enter the foregoing amendments to the claims and make another Office Action because the Examiner failed to treat claim 13 on the merits in the previous Office Action. Nonetheless, it is still believed that claim 13 is allowable.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests entry and consideration of the foregoing amendments.

Drawings Objections

The drawings have been objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a). The Examiner alleged that the feature “water line passing through the cover” is not shown in the drawings. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

In particular, FIG. 4 as originally filed clearly shows that the hose 130 passes through the cover 140 (see also below). The hose 130 extends vertically into the cap 150 (see portion A), turns into the horizontal direction to pass through the cover 140 (see portion B), and again turns into the vertical direction to connect to the valve 120. As shown in FIG. 4, the portion A of the cap 150 is on the outer surface of the cover 140. When the hose 130 extends out of the portion A, it passes through the cover 140.



Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that this objection has been obviated and/or rendered moot. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's drawings objection are respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-12 [sic., 1-5 and 7-11] stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sumihiro, JP 10103827, in view of Sonoda, JP 09243237. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

At the outset, Applicant notes that claims 6 and 12 were previously cancelled and should not have been included in the rejection.

In light of the foregoing amendments to claims 1 and 7, Applicant respectfully submits that this rejection has been obviated and/or rendered moot. While not conceding to the Examiner's rejection, but merely to expedite prosecution, as the Examiner will note, independent claims 1 and 7 have been amended to recite combinations of elements including "the protection cap including a valve cover cap and a water line cap, the valve cover cap covering the valve exposed through the opening, the water line cap being for receiving the water line and permitting the water line to pass through the cover without passing through the valve cover cap." Support for the above combinations of elements can be found in FIGs. 3 and 4 of the instant application as originally filed. Applicant respectfully submits that the combinations of elements as set forth in amended independent claims 1 and 7 are not disclosed or suggested by the references relied on by the Examiner.

The Examiner has acknowledged that Sumihiro fails to disclose a protection cap detachably fastened to an opening. Therefore, Sumihiro also fails to teach "the protection cap including a valve cover cap and a water line cap, the valve cover cap covering the valve exposed through the opening, the water line cap being for receiving the water line and permitting the water line to pass through the cover without passing through the valve cover cap" as recited in amended claims 1 and 7.

Sonoda discloses an opening 3 and a cap 5 inserted into the opening 3 (FIG. 1). By modifying Sumihiro in view of Sonoda's cap 5, the cap 5 has to be inserted into the opening that exposes the valve 42. Since Sumihiro's valve 42 is connected to a pipe 44 via a connector 50 at

the opening (FIG. 1), once the opening is covered by the cap 5, the pipe 44 has to pass through the cap 5 to get connected. Therefore, the combination of Sumihiro and Sonoda fails to teach “the protection cap including a valve cover cap and a water line cap, the valve cover cap covering the valve exposed through the opening, the water line cap being for receiving the water line and permitting the water line to pass through the cover without passing through the valve cover cap” as recited in amended claims 1 and 7.

Applicant respectfully submits that, in the present invention, the protection cap includes a valve cover cap and a water line cap. As embodied in FIGs. 3 and 4, the valve cover cap (lower portion of the cap 150) covers the valve exposed through the opening 145; the water line cap (upper portion of the cap 150) receives the hose 130 and permits the hose 130 to pass through the cover 140 without passing through the valve cover cap (lower portion of the cap 150). Although the cap 5 of Sonoda may cover the valve 42 exposed through the opening 3, the utilized references fail to teach any water line cap permitting the water line to pass through the cover without passing through the cap 5 that covers the opening 3. Since Sonoda’s cap 5 is to cover the opening 3 and Sumihiro’s hose 44 is connected to the valve (via the connector 50) at the opening, without passing through the cap 5, the hose 44 will not be able to get connected. Therefore, the feature as recited in amended claims 1 and 7 is clearly absent from the utilized references.

Accordingly, neither Sumihiro nor Sonoda individually or in combination teach or suggest the limitations of amended independent claims 1 and 7. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that amended independent claims 1 and 7 clearly define over the teachings of Sumihiro and Sonoda.

In addition, claims 2-5 and 8-11 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claims 1 and 7, and are therefore allowable based on their respective dependence from independent claims 1 and 7, which are believed to be allowable.

In view of the above remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-5 and 7-11 clearly define the present invention over the references relied on by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103 are respectfully requested.

Additional Claims

Additional claims 15-19 have been added for the Examiner's consideration. Support for claims 15-19 can be found in FIGs. 3 and 4 of the instant application as originally filed.

Applicant respectfully submits that claims 15-19 are allowable due to their respective dependence on independent claims 1 and 7, as well as due to the additional recitations included in these claims.

Favorable consideration and allowance of additional claims 15-19 are respectfully requested.

Additional Cited References

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but rather to merely show the state of the art, no further comments are necessary with respect thereto.

CONCLUSION

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed and/or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently pending rejections and that they be withdrawn.

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: May 31, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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